

Staffing and Curriculum Committee Meeting PART A
Minutes of the Meeting to held on Tuesday 11th March 2025
at 6pm at the Sherwood Hill Campus



Fran Boto (FB)	Co-opted Governor (Chair)	Present	
Gemma Davies (GD)	Co-opted Governor (Vice-Chair)	Present	
Penelope Fox (PF)	Parent Governor	Present	
Katerina Kelesidi (KK)	Co-opted Governor	Present	
Valseta Mason (VM)	Staff Governor		Absent
David Murden (DM)	Ex-Officio Governor / Headteacher	Present	
Fiona Taylor (FT)	Foundation Governor	Present	
Jessica Baldwin (JB)	Head of School; The Park campus	Present	
Beth Brooks (BB)	Head of School; The Hill campus	Present	
Anna Richardson (AR)	Wellbeing; Trans-disciplinary specialist	Present	
Rosemary Viggiani (RV)	Governance Professional / Clerk	Present	

	Item	Action
1.	<p>Welcome; Apologies for absence and quorum (3)</p> <p>FB opened the meeting 6:00pm and welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from Valseta Mason for personal reasons.</p> <p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest regarding items on the agenda.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 26th November 2024</p> <p>DECISION: The minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2024 were approved as a true and complete record of the meeting.</p> <p>Matters arising:</p> <p>The actions are recorded and updated in the table at the end of these minutes.</p>	
3.	<p>Headteacher's Report <i>(report circulated prior to the meeting)</i></p> <p>The Head was thanked for his report. The report was taken as read and Governors asked questions as noted below.</p> <p><i>Page 3 of the report notes the rise in having to use restraint – why has this arisen and how are these situations handled?</i></p> <p>AR provided a detailed explanation noting that this relates to a rise in restrictive practice which is different to restraint. This refers to a range of techniques that do not fully restrain the child but limits what they can do and where they can go. AR noted that she is less concerned about restrictive practice than restraint and explained how this is necessary for some children – especially children who are new to the school. These children will have a restrictive practice plan that is reviewed termly and signed off by a member of SLT (DM, AR, BB or JB) and also discussed with and signed by the parents.</p> <p>AR outlined the main reasons as to why the number of children with such plans generally increase in the Autumn Term and then drops in the Spring and Summer terms. This is often in relation to children who are new to the school and are distressed by change and also come from centres where they use restraint. Sherwood Park School does not use restraint but does use Restrictive Practice until the children have learned new strategies for coping.</p>	

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Item	Action
<p>AR noted that this is also the first time that there has been proper well-being support on this campus (The Hill). Some children are now able to access the community where they could not do so before because it was not safe for them to do so. The school are now supporting children where families cannot take the child into the community and enabling them to work towards this. The school will be helping the children to access the community e.g. taking the child in a car to the park; however, our duty of care means that we put a restrictive practice plan in place for these circumstances – they are all community only based plans. AR provided examples of where they are helping children transition out into the community and, as a result there are increased wellbeing interventions in the community.</p> <p>DM explained how the aim is to avoid the use of both restraint and restrictive practices as a Restraint Free School. We are working towards all aspects of that aim and are making sure that we are explicit and totally transparent in our practices. The reports make it transparent and overt, using the appropriate technical terminology.</p> <p>AR outlined the approaches used which are always in line with the school's duty of care. Staff will always act in the moment to keep all children safe and the school now have plans and risk assessments in place to achieve this. We can never say that we won't use restraint but will always work in the best interests of the child. For example, it would be safer to restrain a child running towards a car than allow them to run into the road unrestrained. Other examples were given. But all plans and actions will be taken in the context of the school's policies and practices.</p> <p><i>Governors asked about the shortage of high tech communications devices noting the funding cuts and the decision by the NHS to not provide any more such devices?</i></p> <p>AR outlined the different devices used by the school – from low tech pod books and visuals saying yes/no, to communication apps on high tech devices such as iPads and phones; the aim is to help most students able to work on low tech devices to move up to a higher tech device. SaLT have a remit to recommend the appropriate system for the child transitioning from low tech through trials of high tech devices. The school has a number of trial devices – all are different dependent upon the difficulties the child is encountering. The trials determine which app is the best fit for the child at the time. Once SaLT evidences the need for a high tech system that talks for the child then, once the assessment is done the school will send the costing to the LA to agree the educational need; we will fund this and get the money back from the LA. There is an interlink between Education and Health and our SEND Team may have determined that there is a Health need but Health have stopped the funding. The child therefore has to retain the trial device and, until a new device is purchased, we can't do more trials thus meaning that other children waiting to transition from low to high tech cannot do so. This seems to be a very artificial barrier and not appropriate for Education to shoulder all the costs as the child will need that device in all circumstances at home, school and out in the community.</p> <p>We have approached the pupil-based commissioner noting that this affects our children more than other schools as so many of our children need these devices. A funding solution has now been agreed moving forwards but a year has passed where our children have had insufficient trials. A lot of parents are complaining as children do not have the devices they need and there is a big backlog due to the cross over between the NHS, Therapies and SEND related needs and funding.</p> <p><i>Governors asked about the points highlighted on page 5 with regards to feeding and toileting, asking about the impact of these issues?</i></p> <p>This discussion around this question is recorded in the Part B Minutes.</p> <p><i>On pages 10 and 11, relating to KS4/5 data, the problems of long term sick leave impacting on teaching and child outcomes are noted. What is being done to address this?</i></p>	

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<p>BB outlined the measures being taken to alleviate the problems noting that progress is being made and the situation is now more positive.</p> <p>AR noted the need to improve succession planning.</p> <p>DM noted that red flags are raised where necessary in the termly safeguarding meeting to ensure that the class has a teacher in their as soon as possible. In the meantime there is the need to give that classroom additional care. All our policies lynchpin on the teacher whose top responsibility is keeping children safe in the class. We are flagging this up in all relevant meetings.</p> <p><i>Governors thanked the Head and the Senior Team for their transparent and detailed report, acknowledging the amount of work that goes into it by all the senior leaders who also demonstrate their depth of understanding around the report when questioned.</i></p> <p><u>SET Monitoring Report</u></p> <p>The Head introduced the report noting that Sean Trimble (ST), who undertook the visit, had been very encouraging about the school and its progress. DM explained how ST had undertaken the visit, spending half a day on each campus, observing and discussing with senior leaders. It was reassuring and helpful to receive the feedback.</p> <p><u>Update on Structure, Recruitment and Capacity</u></p> <p>The Head explained that he wished to make Governors aware of one of the biggest risks at the current time – that of capacity. He described how the leadership team had been managing over the past four years, filling the gaps according to the highest priority needs. Vacancies have been held open and the weight falls on the leaders, requiring them to pick up additional jobs. The school is now over the planned student numbers and the cracks are starting to show with a few more complaints and incidents; although there has been nothing major arising, it highlights the need to prioritise the top part of the staff structure.</p> <p>The history of the development of the two sites over time was discussed noting the increase in PAN to 152 and how the school now have around 180 students – about 30 over PAN (equivalent to 4 or 5 whole classes). The risks are clear with senior leaders being fatigued with a limited ability to cope. The 3-year budget is now being developed and will be presented to FAR Committee next week but the is likely to show a deficit position. The need is to prioritise oversight and leadership capacity. Once the budget forecast is clearer the leadership will make recommendations accordingly.</p> <p>The budget is being developed at the moment; some difficult decisions are required but it is likely that a different structure may be required whilst working within the same budget. Some changes will be required because the pressure on the leadership team now is a false economy and opportunities and savings are being missed as a result.</p> <p><i>Governors acknowledged the pressures but noted that, if more senior roles were to be recruited and teaching assistant roles cut then staff and parents are likely to ask why. The reasons need to be clear.</i></p> <p>The Head agreed and confirmed that the school would be needing to speak to all stakeholders; the aim would be to look at cohorts and plan it over a number of years. If the school takes on the site at Carew then the central service costs would be shared.</p> <p><i>Governors emphasised the need to have it well thought through and presented to avoid losing good staff.</i></p> <p>The Head agreed but also noted the potential to lose staff anyway if the leadership are stressed and not able to keep staff safe or give them the right support</p> <p>AR added that, because of the collaborative ways of working developed over the past few years, the staff are living the problems with the leadership and seeing the capacity issues – they are overtly obvious to staff. That is not to say that there won't be concerns raised – but it is obvious to staff; if any of the leaders are off, it is apparent to the rest of the school.</p>	

	Item	Action
	<p>The Head said that he feels that the biggest risk is losing good staff; good wider leaders are not getting opportunities to progress but can see what needs to be done – there is a need for succession planning.</p> <p>Governors thanked the Head for the update and noted that this will be a matter that will arise again during the budget process.</p>	
4.	<p>Presentation: consultation re Carew</p> <p>DM presented slides that had been provided by Jack, the pupil commissioning officer at the LA. The consultation has now ended and the LA People Committee are meeting on Thursday to discuss this and make a decision.</p> <p>The consultation had been positive overall.</p> <p>The presentation covered the forecast rise in specialist places needed. Angel Hill Free School is not yet built and pupils now in Year 6 currently have nowhere to go in September.</p> <p>The proposal is for 24 additional places at SPS from September 2025. The current Carew Academy is relocating at the end of April 2025. There is a need to update the building and, even if Angel Hill is built, the LA will still be over planned numbers.</p> <p>The LA had approached Sherwood Park asking us to take on these additional students. It has been discussed with other schools but we already have the skills and are the most able to support these children. We would take secondary age pupils initially – from the Oakfield and Rainbows bases and some from the Link. This is the pathway that Angel Hill would have met. It can also help us with capacity. For our existing pupils there are also many benefits, not least the huge grounds – we could use the grounds to offer Forest School to all pupils.</p> <p>DM showed the buildings and described how the different areas could be used. In addition to the specialist facilities, there would be room for communal offices for back-office staff.</p> <p>A project manager is being engaged and the sensory areas are being designed.</p> <p><i>Governors asked if the new site would also help ease the pressures on car-parking felt by staff and local residents?</i></p> <p>The Head agreed that it would do so.</p> <p><i>Governors asked about the capacity on the site?</i></p> <p>AR noted that there are 240 children on site currently.</p> <p><i>It was also suggested that it would be good to hold the Strategy Day there in May if the proposal goes ahead.</i></p> <p>AR outlined how all 32 children identified as potential students for Carew had now been visited by SPS staff. Whilst it is apparent that some children could not have their needs met at Carew, there is a cohort of about 16 children who would be exactly right for Carew.</p> <p>The differing requirements and complexity of need of the children proposed for Carew were outlined in broad terms. The high level of support required was noted and will need discussion with the LA during the next planning stage particularly around costs.</p> <p>When compared to the process followed when SPS expanded into the Hill site the school is far better prepared to develop these plans with a much better understanding of the issues and needs.</p> <p>The challenges faced by the two existing sites was also discussed. Carew may also help in this regard giving greater flexibility that will be required to facilitate the required building work at the Park.</p> <p>The Head noted that it is a real compliment to the school that Sutton have asked Sherwood Hill to take this on. All are looking for us to succeed and there has also recently been good news on the capital bids for the two existing campus. The contractors have been appointed for the rebuild at The Hill and the LA are currently negotiating start date for the work.</p>	

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	Item	Action																												
5.	<p>Governor Visits and Training</p> <p>Update from Link Governors – including Governor visits held and planned</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Safeguarding</td> <td>FGB</td> <td>Fran Boto</td> <td>Fiona Taylor</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SEND</td> <td>FGB</td> <td>Gemma Davies</td> <td>Penelope Fox</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pupil Premium</td> <td>S&C</td> <td>Penelope Fox</td> <td>Valseta Mason</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Student Well-being</td> <td>S&C</td> <td>Valseta Mason</td> <td>Gemma Davies</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Curriculum & achievement</td> <td>S&C</td> <td>Penelope Fox</td> <td>Katerina Kelesidi</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Equality</td> <td>S&C</td> <td>Fran Boto</td> <td>Katerina Kelesidi</td> </tr> <tr> <td>HR</td> <td>S&C</td> <td>Katerina Kelesidi</td> <td>Fiona Taylor</td> </tr> </table> <p>Governor Visits and Training / Matters arising regarding Safeguarding</p> <p>RV outlined how Link Governors can use the Policy Planner to identify the policies that they have oversight of.</p> <p>FB noted that she has been attending the termly school Safeguarding Meetings where they forensically look at safeguarding needs and she noted the poor response from Health. It is absolutely right that if the student's health needs are not met then the child cannot attend school.</p> <p>ACTION: FB also noted the need for her and FT to review the SCR.</p>	Safeguarding	FGB	Fran Boto	Fiona Taylor	SEND	FGB	Gemma Davies	Penelope Fox	Pupil Premium	S&C	Penelope Fox	Valseta Mason	Student Well-being	S&C	Valseta Mason	Gemma Davies	Curriculum & achievement	S&C	Penelope Fox	Katerina Kelesidi	Equality	S&C	Fran Boto	Katerina Kelesidi	HR	S&C	Katerina Kelesidi	Fiona Taylor	40
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6.	<p>Pupil Premium and Sports Premium funding <i>(review of outcomes)</i></p> <p>The report had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was noted that FAR have reviewed the financial elements and this committee review the outcomes which are very clearly defined within the report. Governors thanked the school for the report.</p>																													
7.	<p>Standing updates:</p> <p><u>Attendance:</u></p> <p>It was noted that attendance is in line with that for other similar Special Schools.</p> <p>The Head outlined that the school's expectation is that all children can attend as appropriate to their needs; it was noted that the framework, as far as Ofsted view it, is changing from September.</p> <p>The school outlined some of the changes that they have made to improve monitoring and follow up including the move to e-registers which improves the efficiency of the registration process and therefore frees up more time for effective follow-up on absence.</p> <p>The impact of the new attendance codes was also discussed.</p> <p>The policy regarding the letters sent was discussed noting the need to balance the legal requirements for follow up with a detailed and sympathetic understanding of each child's health and circumstances.</p> <p>The school will be reviewing the letters sent; feedback from parents suggests that it would be helpful to note that the school are under a legal obligation to follow up to ensure safeguarding of the children.</p> <p>The related issue of granting permission for parents to take children on holiday during term time was also discussed.</p> <p>For children with profound disabilities, holidays in term time may be the only option and can bring multiple benefits. Aside from the widely cited reasons around affordability, this can especially be pertinent to families with a severely disabled child who face extraordinary costs in their day-to-day lives. In addition, it may be that accommodation with special beds or hoists has limited availability and taking a holiday in term time may be the only way a child can experience a different environment.</p> <p>Whether or not to grant a request is at the Head's discretion but it is not an easy decision.</p>																													

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<p>There can similarly be risks – for instance, if a request is granted for 5 days absence, then, if that child were being kidnapped then the school would not know until day 6 when that child was due back at school.</p> <p><i>Governors asked if the school had explored what other Special Schools do in this regard?</i></p> <p>The school said that it had not explored this as the school’s attendance officer had been so firm in their stance.</p> <p>The apparent disconnect between the guidance on taking holidays and the granting of absence for respite was discussed. The potential for changing the holiday dates for Sherwood Park to allow parents time outside of the standard holiday dates was discussed.</p> <p>ACTION: BB / JB to explore how other Special Schools manage absence and requests for holidays in term-time.</p> <p><u>Update from Sleuth and MyConcern / Safeguarding:</u></p> <p>Parts of this discussion are recorded in the Part B Minutes.</p> <p>AR explained that Sleuth and MyConcern have different functionality and reporting and the school are looking at ways to merge the two. It would be helpful to have the behaviour information linking better with the Safeguarding data.</p> <p>When the school raises concerns they need speedier responses and recognition of the level that the team at the school are working at. There is the need for more regular risk meetings that the Head of Social Care will attend. If children can’t stay at the school because of factors within the control of the LA then this affects all budgets – as well as the wellbeing of the children.</p> <p>AR noted that it is apparent in the Parent Forums for Children Looked After (CLA), no one at the LA is taking account of the needs of our pupils that could prevent them going into care. Some of the issues are around barriers to sufficient respite; there are very few residential homes. DM is also raising this with the relevant manager in Health - Alison Stuart and will present these issues to the Sutton SEND Partnership.</p> <p>Governors thanked the school for their input.</p> <p><u>Review Online Safeguarding audit issued by LSCP / to monitor progress against actions.</u></p> <p>The audit and action plan had been circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The significant improvements made in this area over the past few years was noted and the school thanked for their work on this. The issues being raised now are generally low level concerns and more about potential improvements than safety concerns. No major actions had been identified.</p> <p><i>Governors noted the progress since the last report and congratulated the school.</i></p> <p>AR noted that this is the second year with minimal actions; the LA Audit is carried out every two years and will be due again in July 2025. The school have addressed all actions from the previous audit.</p> <p><i>Governors asked who completes the audit?</i></p> <p>AR explained that it is a self-assessment with evidence and documents uploaded. Nearly all the actions arising are “nice to haves” or not essential; they are derived from improvements suggested by the school.</p> <p><i>Governors questioned some points where nothing was raised, giving examples.</i></p> <p>BB explained that the submission was via a Google sheet and all questions were completed but had not come through or been reflected in this document as downloaded. This seems to be feedback in common with that from other schools.</p> <p>It was agreed that the document seen by the Governors was sufficient for their scrutiny. Moving forwards what is important is for Governors to see the actions arising from the statutory document and reassurance that the school are working through the list.</p> <p>ACTION: AR to circulate to the Governors information about the actions arising from the Safeguarding Audits and progress towards them.</p>	<p>41</p>
<p></p>	<p>42</p>

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Action list

Item	Action point	Who	By when	Update
Actions arising from the meeting of 26 th November 2024				
34	DM to brief colleagues to ensure that any technical terms in reports are spelt out in full in reports when first used with the acronym in brackets; the acronym can then be used in further references within that report.	DM	Dec 24	Action completed and closed
35	RV / GD to speak with Valseta regarding the role of PP Link Governor.	RV / GD	Dec 24	Action completed and closed
36	DM to send the SET Monitoring Report to RV for circulation once finalised.	DM	Dec 24	Action completed and closed
37	DM to provide more detailed information on Sports Premium and Pupil Premium in future reports (Note: there is a requirement to update the report on the use of this funding on the school website.)	DM	Spring Term 2025	Action completed and closed
38	Headteacher to present a Strategy Plan by 9 th December for approval at the FGB on 16 th December at FGB.	DM	Dec 24	Action completed and closed
39	Present the SEND Policy and Report to Parents to the March FGB for approval.	DM	March 25	The SEND Policy was approved on 11 th March; action closed and replaced by Action 43.
Actions arising from the meeting of 11 th March 2025				
40	FB also noted the need for her and FT to review the SCR.	FB/FT	May 25	
41	BB / JB to explore how other Special Schools manage absence and requests for holidays in term-time.	BB / JB	May 25	
42	AR to circulate to the Governors information about the actions arising from the Safeguarding Audits and progress towards them.	AR	July 25	
43	AR to present the following documents for FGB approval: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SEND Information Report for Parents - Supporting Students with Medical Needs & Administration of Medicines Policy - Wellbeing Policies – Anti-bullying; Behaviour and Restrictive Practice 	AR	25/03/25	